DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING PAPER

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IMPROVING COORDINATION WITH THE ALLIES IN RESPONSE TO THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

Issues

The Allies agreed that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan challenged the basic ground rules of East-West relations. Given differing national capabilities and vulnerabilities, the record of response has been a mixed one. Further, time, the war between Iran and Iraq, and developments in Poland have blurred the public focus on Afghanistan.

-- The Allied record on economic sanctions is a shaky one, with the U.S. far out in front of others (separate transition paper on sanctions prepared by EB).

-- The Allies have accelerated their defense efforts under the concept of a division of labor. In our view, however, Allied efforts continue to be inadequate. Moreover, there has been some questioning of the concept of a division of labor, by which the U.S. takes the lead in responsibilities for defense contingencies outside Europe--e.g., Southwest Asia (SWA)--while the Europeans undertake increased efforts to fill the resulting defense gap in Europe. Critics of the concept claim that it gives to the Europeans credit for too parochial and regional a role, and does not take account of their nonmilitary contributions to stability in SWA and elsewhere in the Third World.

-- Other aspects of the Allied response to Afghanistan--such as the disappointing record on the Olympic boycott, and meetings by Giscard and Schmidt with Brezhnev--further served to highlight the broad question of how the West responds to Soviet aggression, and the tendency of Europe to seek a softer stance with their Soviet neighbors and to preserve the European benefits of detente.

Time Constraints

Our Allies will look for an early indication of the new Administration's policies on economic sanctions.

The Allies will anticipate an early statement of the new Administration's interest in greater European defense efforts, and will be particularly attentive to how we state this interest--by reiterating the theme of a three percent increase in real defense spending (see separate paper) or by some other means.

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On the broader questions of a division of labor and a general framework for a Western response to Soviet aggression, the Europeans will be looking early on for a statement of some basic principles underlying U.S. views. We could be most effective in this regard by a judicious mix of consultation and pronouncement.

What We Are Doing And Why

We are maintaining sanctions against the USSR generally, continuing to urge the Allies to make clear to the Soviets and the world at large that their continuing occupation of Afghanistan will have direct costs in their dealings with us. In this context, we have continued to press the Allies to adopt as strict as possible a set of economic sanctions.

We continue to emphasize to the Allies the need for greater defense efforts, for meeting the three percent commitment, and for facilitating enroute access for the U.S. to crisis areas in time of emergency. We are also making clear the seriousness of our own defense efforts and preparations relating to Southwest Asia.

We have successfully encouraged the Allies to join in a major statement at a combined meeting of Defense and Foreign Ministers (minus France) last May. This statement recognized that crises outside the European theater--as in SWA--are relevant to Allied interests; that individual Allies (notably the U.S.) have a responsibility to act outside NATO in behalf of common interests; and that other Allies have a responsibility to meet the gap in European defense that may result.

In November, we briefed the Allies on our overall security framework relating to SWA, encouraging them to make greater defense efforts, including completion of tasks indicated by major NATO commanders. We have also made clear that we are ready to listen to new ideas on the division of labor--repeating, however, our criterion that Allied defense efforts should increase.